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News

Hollis woman finds Web work at school

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By HATTIE BERNSTEIN

Staff Writer

HOLLIS – Hollis resident Iris Realmuto jokes that her volunteer jobs as Web site designer and maintainer for the Hollis School Board and the high school and middle school PTAs get her out of the house.

But the twenty year DEC/Compaq/HP software engineer and project manager who holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the Rochester Institute of Technology, is being modest. laid off 2009 outsourced starete in 2009.

Fourteen years ago, when her oldest daughter was in first grade, Realmuto volunteered to design and maintain a Web site for the Hollis Elementary People, a precursor to the elementary school's Parent Teacher Association.

At the time, most parents hadn't heard of the Internet. But after two years, Realmuto was getting requests to post everything from bus schedules and snow days to agendas, meeting notices, and daily announcements.

"Denise Hurt (another parent) and I created a School Board report, using the draft minutes and editing them down to one page, attaching it to the elementary school newsletter," Realmuto said. "Parents liked it."


Realmuto stayed on the job long after her two daughters, now college students, had graduated, adding a Hollis School Board page in 2004 and launching a separate School Board Web site five years later.


In 2002, she developed a Web site for the Hollis/Brookline Middle School PTSA, before her daughters were students there, and she has maintained the site for nine years, long after her daughters graduated.

She did the same in 2004 for the high school PTSA and has continued to maintain that Web site.

And two years ago, after her job with HP was outsourced to India, Realmuto started her own Web site design company, "Web By Iris, LLC," a company that targets small businesses and non-profits.



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"I would be doing the School Board site whether I was paid or not. I think having the information out there is important,"

Realmuto said, adding that this year the School Board is paying her "a small stipend."

The work is testimony to Realmuto's commitment, shared with her husband, Steve, to education and communication.

It's also a way for the Long Island, N.Y. native to give back to the community.

"My parents always valued education," Realmuto said. "My mother went to college in the 70s, the local community college where they gave credits for lifelong learning. In high school, because she was a woman, they said, "You'll be a secretary. End of story."

In her roles as Web master and maintainer, Realmuto said, she enjoys knowing that she's helping other parents stay informed.

"I publish what parents need to know," she said,

Her work, moreover, is driven by the PTSA and school board calendars.

In late August and early September, for example, Realmuto posts the new bus routes, forms, and PTSA officers' names and makes sure meeting agendas and minutes are on the Web sites.

"They definitely depend on me," she said.

Interest keeps growing.

Recently, Realmuto joined a committee that is examining all the Web sites in the School Administrative Unit (SAU), elementary, middle, high school, and school boards.

"We're looking at consistency, naming conventions, structure and content across the different school and School Board sites," she said.

Meanwhile, Realmuto remains a one-woman, mostly-volunteer operation, maintaining the Hollis School Board and middle and high school PTSA sites.

"A lot of times, it (doesn't get done) until someone raises their hand, wanting to do it," she said. "For over two years, the high school PTSA was asking me, 'How do you do this?' They couldn't get it off the ground, and I said, "I'll just do it."

For more information, or to view the school Web sites, go to hsbsau41.org; hbhsptsa.org; or hbmsptsa.org.

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